(a) whether All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) threatened to launch agitation if the Centre do not ban transgenic hybrid varieties including Bt. Cotton in the country in view of their harmful effects on environment and people;

(b) if so, the views of Government on use of genetically modified seeds; and

(c) the action taken by Government to compensate farmers who incurred losses by opting Bt. Cotton?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government is following a policy of case by case approval of transgenic crops. Bt. cotton is the only transgenic crop approved for commercial cultivation in India. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) accorded conditional approval for commercial cultivation of three Bt. Cotton varieties namely MECH-12, MECH-162 and MECH-184 of M/s Mahyco Hybrid Seed Company Ltd. in April, 2002 for a period of three years. During Kharif 2002, some of the Bt. cotton fields were monitored by the Committees constituted by this Ministry. The Committees observations and discussion with farmers indicated that the performance of Bt. Cotton is satisfactory as compared to its non Bt. counterpart. However, the yield of cotton crop (both in Bt. and Non-Bt. Hybrid), has been severely affected due to severe drought conditions during Kharif 2002. In view of the varying agro climatic conditions it has been decided to assess the performance of during a period of three years.

Forest land for Distribution among tribals in Kerala

595. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have agreed to grant 25,000 acres of forest land for distribution among tribals in Kerala;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Central inspection team which visited Kerala for the purpose had suggested to submit a fresh report on the land to be given to the tribals as the land identified by the Kerala State Government was thick forest land; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the State Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) to (d) The State Government had submitted a proposal to the Central Government for diversion of 12,196 hectares of vested forest land for distribution among the tribals in the State in January, 2002. The Central inspection team visited the proposed areas in June, 2003 and reported that the proposal sent by the State Government did not take into consideration the present ground realities. Keeping in view the recommendation of the team, the State Government have been informed that the proposal, in the present form, pending in the Ministry has been closed.

Checking encroachments on coastal areas

596. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is true that a two member Committee has been constituted by Coastal Zone Authority to improve the ecological balance and to check the environmental degradation around coastal areas;

(b) if so, the main reommendations of the above Committee to check the encroachment of coastal areas and excessive exploitation of sea resources alongwith the follow up thereof;

(c) whether high tide line has since been extended by 500 meters to check encroachments on coastal areas; and

(d) if so, the complete details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.